

Volunteers scour 151 tons of trash in Great Sierra River Cleanup

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Ben Furtado/Auburn Journal

Getting a head start on the Great Sierra River Cleanup Thursday afternoon, Sierra Nevada Conservancy member Tristyn Armstrong pulls a plastic bag from the American River confluence as other members from back left, Pete Dufour, project manager Brittany Juergenson and Joan Keegan look on.

An estimated 4,500 volunteers collected approximately 151 tons of trash, appliances, car parts and other debris during the second annual Great Sierra River Cleanup Saturday.

The cleanup, sponsored by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, involves dozens of partner organizations throughout the Sierra Nevada.

"It was a huge success and we are thrilled at the turnout and the enthusiasm for this event," SNC Executive Officer Jim Branham said. "Sixty-five percent of California's water supply comes from the Sierra so it was great to see so many people coming out to be good stewards of their rivers, lakes and streams."

Volunteers scoured beaches and riverbanks to collect paper trash, aluminum cans, plastic bags, cigarette butts, cardboard, glass bottles and more. Some of the more interesting items removed during this year's cleanup included shopping carts, a bottle of moonshine and a boogie board.

The cleanup took place at more than 125 sites in the Sierra, virtually every watershed was included. Plans are already under way for next year. The cleanup began last year and is conducted in conjunction with the annual California Coastal Cleanup. Combined, the two events make up the single largest one-day volunteer event in California.

The Great Sierra River Cleanup gets major support from CalTrans' "Don't Trash California" Litter Prevention Campaign, Sierra Commons and Waste Management Inc. Additional support comes from the Pacific Forest and Watersheds Stewardship Council, Sierra Pacific Foundation, The Houston Group, CalRecycle, the California Ski Industry Association, Crystal Geyser and Nature's Path, California Coastal Commission and the Ocean Conservancy.

~ Staff report